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Duxbury Clipper

New Minister in the Pulpit at First Parish

For the first time in more than a quarter of a century, a new settled minister took to the pulpit at First Parish Church Unitarian Universalist last Sunday.

Reverend Catherine Cullen, a former trial attorney, was called as minister last spring by the members of First Parish. The previous settled minister was Robbie Walsh, who retired in 2003. During the search for his successor, Rosemarie Smurzynski served as interim minister for the historic church that was gathered in 1632, with William Elder Brewster as its first minister.

The first worship service led by Cullen in her settled ministry coincided with "Ingathering Sunday," when church members traditionally come together in the sanctuary each September following a summer of informal, lay-led services. A Water Communion has been celebrated at Ingathering for the past several years. Many members of the congregation brought water gathered on summer travels to places near and far, or even from home pools, puddles and rain barrels, and local beaches. All the water was combined in a common vessel to be used in ceremonies and rituals throughout the coming year.

"Our water communion represents the pooling of our experiences, our talents, our energies, and our joys and our sorrows as we come together in community to begin a new



Rev. Catherine Cullen, the new settled minister of First Parish.

church year, and to begin a new shared ministry," Cullen told the congregation. "This holy water will be our sacred water, our holy water, because it symbolizes...this community of faith."

In serving the church for more than two decades, Reverend Cullen's predecessor impacted many lives and had an influence on the town and community as well. Cullen says she looks forward to a similar legacy.

"First Parish Church has played a significant role in the life of the town since 1632," says Cullen. "It has a rich tradition of contributing to the well-being of Duxbury, and I look forward to helping this wonderful congregation continue this tradition."

Prior to entering the ministry, Cullen worked for more than 20 years as an attorney, working both for her own law

firm and as the first Chief of the Legal Bureau for the Child Support Enforcement Division of the Mass. Dept. of Revenue.

Before coming to First Parish, she served a two-year term as Interim Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of South County, Rhode Island. She also served as the summer minister for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Reading, and completed a two-year part-time internship at First Parish, Brewster.

Reverend Cullen, a Surplus Street resident, is married to David Cutler, publisher of the *Duxbury Clipper*. They are parents to a blended family of six children. Most of their children are grown; their 10-year-old daughter Becky still lives at home.